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THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE SUPERVISION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS BY THE STATE OR MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY.*

In our zeal for the advancement of Public School Education, it is to be feared that we have ignored two facts: first, that in increasingly large numbers everywhere save in New England, our more prosperous citizens have been sending their children not to the national schools, but to schools and academies essentially private; and second, that up to this hour no organized movement has been made looking to the systematizing and supervising of these private and endowed schools, in which some 2,000,000 American boys and girls are being educated. Change but a word here and there, and what Horace Mann said of public school education fifty years ago, is true of a large part of American education to-day: "These schools are so many distinct, independent communities, each being governed by its own habits, traditions, and local customs. There is no common superintending power over them; there is no bond of brotherhood or family between them. The teachers are, as it were, embedded each in his own district and they are yet to be excavated and brought together, and to be established, each as a polished pillar of a holy temple. As the system is now administered, if any improvement in principles or modes of teaching is discovered by talent or accident, in one school, instead of being published to the world it dies with the discoverer. No means exist for multiplying new truths, or even for preserving old ones." And that Chorepheus of our ed-

* The term, "Private Schools" as used in this paper, includes all schools not under the State control; *i. e.*, endowed and preparatory schools. Read at the International Congress of Secondary Education, Chicago, July 26.

educational reform goes on to ask : " Do we not need some new and living institution, some animate organization which shall at least embody and diffuse all that is now known and thereby save every year hundreds of children from being sacrificed to experiments which have been a hundred times exploded ? " We ask further : Must each generation of secondary school masters, laying no tribute upon capitalized experience, begin its fortunes anew and exhaust all possible errors before arriving at the soundest principles of school work ? Happily America is the last of the highly civilized nations to give attention to this large department of the teaching work. Our friends here from Germany, France, Russia and Sweden, will tell us what state supervision has done for higher education in each of these countries, and representatives of the British schools will, from the mixed practice in vogue in the United Kingdom, further irradiate the subject from their point of view.

To simplify our subject, nothing will be said in this paper of the strange and hurtful isolation of the private schools and academies from the public high schools—two classes of schools that should in the necessities of the case have very much in common. They are both doing collegiate preparatory work, and pupils are constantly, in all parts of our land, being transferred from one to the other and usually with considerable embarrassment to both pupils and teachers.

Looking at the question before us in its entirety, it concerns primarily 250,000 pupils in our public high schools, and 200,000 in private schools of secondary grade. Our brief, then, is in the interests of nearly a half million boys and girls, many of whom are to swell the 100,000 enrollment of the five hundred American colleges ! Surely this is a leading question in the education of the day ! By necessary consequence, by unescapable implication, we are face to face with some of the deeper questions of education, such as the age of admission, the contents of a course of secondary instruction, and the professional training of teachers.

But some one will say, directly, you suggest supervision of what has been deemed private business. " This is a Republic. Long ago we burst the bonds of a meddlesome paternalism. Intelligent individualism is now the regulative principle, and we will not return to any of the forms of despotism. " But this is hasty speech and ignores the many forms in which we voluntarily submit to

authority in every relation of the citizen life. If republican institutions "do wake to life unexampled energies in the whole mass of the people and bestow upon the people unexampled power to work out their will," these same institutions should induce the highest self-control and guidance. It were a strange folly to add to the impulsive forces of a people without also adding to their regulating forces. If it be indeed true that the next generation shall contain a larger percentage of men and women graduated from our higher institutions, men who in the nature of the case shall exert mighty influence in the affairs of the nation, it ill befits us to bandy words about private rights in a business that conditions so profoundly the welfare of the state. We create and maintain a national congress convening annually at incredible expense, to regulate the tariff, internal improvements, and currency; we have state legislatures to legislate about every conceivable subject; we have courts, sitting and moving, to adjudicate upon the rights of person and property of every degree of importance, and yet here is a large section, in some respects the most important section of education, which had received literally nothing thus far in the way of organization and united effort.

We grant freely the high character, skill and devotion of many worthy private school teachers and proprietors, but it is straining unduly our poor human nature to ask it to work as well without as with direction, supervision and accountability. Nor does it meet the objection to say that these private schools are under the supervision of parents, trustees, and the public. I know of a prominent private fitting school whose entire graduating class of some twenty-five members recently failed to secure a sufficient number of credits to admit it to one of our lower grade colleges. This stunning disappointment was the first information parents or public had of the inferior instruction being given. The half-dozen larger academies of the country receiving pupils from every state in the Union know the deplorable standards that are tolerated all too generally in our private day and boarding schools. Unquestionably, some of these unsupervised schools are superior to the very best of our public schools, and yet I heard a member of the committee appointed by Harvard College to examine one of our most famous academies, say that if the report of his committee were to be published it would make a great stir in the school world.

It is passing strange that, though you will not commit the care of your body to an unlicensed physician, the care of your property to an unlicensed attorney, nor the care of your soul to an unlicensed clergyman, yet you send your son and daughter, not merely for five or six hours a day, but for months and years to a school-master whose best qualification may be only that he has mastered the art of advertising. With the exception of Great Britain, I believe, we are the only enlightened nation that commits such folly. Elsewhere the teacher—man or woman—must pass a prescribed examination, and thereafter his or her school must submit to some form of supervision and control.

For a moment let us dwell upon a statement which may be made without fear of successful contradiction. It is this : *Supervised education has always and everywhere proved good education ; education without such supervision has always proved inferior.* I shall not detain you with the historic proofs of this proposition, but many of you will recall the first movements by the Jesuits for better schools—a body of teachers whose glaring faults in some particulars are readily admitted, and yet no less an authority than Robert Herbert Quick says : “ No other school system has been built up by the united efforts of so many astute intellects ; no other has met with so great success, or attained such widespread influence. No body of men since the revival of learning has played so prominent a part in education. Their skill and capacity are attested by such high authorities as Bacon and Descartes. For more than one hundred years nearly all the prominent men throughout Christendom—both among laity and clergy—received the Jesuit training and for life regarded their old masters with reverence and affection.” Now the central excellence of this Jesuit training was in the word, “ system.” The famous commission of 1584 formed a closely articulated and minutely supervised system of education, extending over the period of our own secondary courses. It could also be shown that the patronage and supervision of education under the Caliphs of Bagdad and Cordova contributed in no small measure to the remarkable success of the Mohammedan Schools that flourished with such signal efficiency for five centuries. In the Schools of Bagdad, Damascus, Cordova, Salamanca, and Toledo, Grammar, Chemistry, Algebra, Trigonometry and Astronomy, were made to assume new forms and made very great advances.

Coming to more recent times, the history of education in France and Germany is largely the history of organized, systematized, supervised work. The French Convention of 1793 prepared the way for the ample reforms and systems inaugurated thirteen years later by Napoleon, and it is worthy of note that the best impulses of reform in the French Schools started from the Lycées or Secondary Schools. I need not dwell on the fundamental characteristics of the German Schools. Suffice it to say that we would almost accept the Army Bill if thereby we could have the German Gymnasias in our own land, or at least the capacity and efficiency of these schools. Before completing our hurried glance at organized education, reflect for a moment upon the condition of the English Schools. Here so much has been left to individual effort and denominational zeal that the historian must record the verdict, that education has made less progress in England than in any other European State. Her theory and practice closely resemble our own. In our country, may I not with all prudence say, that our public school system, taken in its entirety, explain the fact as we may, is superior at every point to our haphazard, unsystematized private schools. This is not due as often charged to the inability of some private school pupils to meet the demands of the public schools, for the vast majority of our private school pupils have at no time been connected with public schools. It has ceased to be a question in thousands of American homes whether or no the children shall attend the public schools. They are foreordained to the all too tender mercies of the "select school."

If what I have been trying to say be admitted, it is idle to deprecate supervised schools because of the sure taint of politics. The genius and earnestness of our people may be trusted to stay the hand of this malign influence in the affairs of our schools. Enlarged responsibilities, including the care of the schools patronized by classes of citizens likely to be more exacting and more influential, would indeed induce a higher sense of duty and less meddling methods on the part of the custodians of our schools. It is quite germane to our subject, as it seems to me, to call attention to that other form of governmental control of our schools exemplified in the national academies at West Point and Annapolis. The Director of the English Military School at Woolwich volunteered to me the statement that these two American schools

were the best schools in the world. This I believe to be true as regards all matters of organization and method. Horace Mann's predictions have not been fulfilled. A way was found to supervise these national schools that made it possible to secure princely teachers and to produce the highest educational results yet attained in the scholastic world. And the hour is at hand when the vast interests of our collegiate education as represented primarily in our private schools can no longer be left to unaccredited, unsupervised masters and schools. The foreign nations that are copying our system of public school education must be saved the present palpable defects in our unsystematized private schools. Of course with the open-minded members of the private school teaching force, there would be every form of hospitality to a proper board of supervision. In each state a number of schools would have nothing to fear and much to gain by this public accrediting of their work. A long stride forward would be made in the work of professionalizing the teaching office, and as one result, publishers, insurance companies, and general trade would find it more difficult to lure teachers from their chosen career. And another result of such a recognition of our work would be the higher value and the greater permanency attaching to it. What anybody is able to do is not worth as much as that which only a limited number is able or permitted to do. There are now too many registered teachers at our agencies. There should be no employment bureaus except for servants. Imagine a "Lawyers' Agency," "a Physicians' Bureau," or a "Ministers' Employment Club."

I am well aware that laws cannot save us from any of the evils that may threaten. But with us—let us remember for our comfort—the very idea of legislation is reversed. Once, the law prescribed the action and shaped the wills of the multitude; with us the multitude prescribe and shape the law. Legislators study the will of the people as philosophers study a volcano—not with any idea of doing aught to the volcano, but to see what the volcano is about to do to them. Therefore it is that we have no longer the dread of the olden time of law makers, and we are the more willing to reduce to operative and efficient forms the people's will. Let us not hesitate to do this in the matter before us. An able lawyer of national reputation, thinks that ample authority to make laws regulating education of all kinds is given by the Con-

stitutional clause, reading, "Congress has power to lay and collect taxes . . . and provide for the common defense and *general welfare of the United States.*" But this supreme work of education is left to the several states, and to them the appeal for proper regulation of the secondary schools must be made. If I cannot sell sour bread or hawk decayed fish without the interference of the board of health, why should I fear the "paternalism" in government, state or municipal, that bars me from giving an inferior quality of instruction?

I do not care here to consider at length the ways by which this regulation should be achieved. It would be amazing if our people, in view of the manifold forms by which we now safely lay tribute upon national, state, and municipal authority, could not devise some amicable and effective arrangement, derived, if need be, from the fish-market, the present school-board and the board of Control of the West Point and Annapolis schools. I would not have the system of supervision by which our public schools are governed. Nor would I care to see another Board of Regents such as directs public education in New York, excellent as that system may be in some respects. There is at least one illustration of what might be done to justify the proposition of this paper. I venture to give it at some length, as set forth by William Allen Butler, Esq., in his plea before the legislature of New York.

"In 1763 the Colonial legislature passed an act which organized the Board of Wardens for the port of New York, and gave them power to license pilots, making it compulsory on masters of vessels to accept their services or pay half pilotage. Gradually a vicious element crept into the system. The Board of Wardens, appointed by the party in power in the state government, became infected by the virus of politics, which communicated its bad influence to the pilots. The older pilots shirked their duty, and in the winter storms, instead of braving the dangers of the coast, toasted their toes in comfortable quarters, while incoming emigrant vessels were signaling in vain for their aid.

"The pilotage system became an intolerable monopoly. The Chamber of Commerce of New York, and the whole shipping interest, petitioned the legislature against it. The licensed pilots opposed the repeal or alteration of the law; and in reply to a call from the legislature, the Port Wardens reported that "*officially*" they knew of no existing evils. The legislature rose without act-

ing on the subject, but a terrible lesson was in reserve. On Sunday morning, the 27th of November, 1836, at nine o'clock, the passenger ship *Bristol* lay at the entrance to the port, "*with the usual signal flying for a New York Pilot, but as none came out*, she remained in the offing until about four o'clock, half an hour before night fell in, when she struck upon Rockaway Beach and was lost. On Sunday morning, January 1st, 1837, the barque *Mexico*, another passenger vessel, lay off the bar, with about thirty other square-rigged vessels, all having signals flying for pilots. The *Mexico* continued standing off and on till midnight, and at night the whole fleet of ships displayed lanterns from their yards for pilots; *still no pilot came*, and she was wrecked during the night.

"A fearful number of lives were lost by each of these disasters. On the ill-fated *Mexico* 104 passengers, two-thirds of their number being women and children, were frozen to death.

"A thrill of horror was caused by this awful sacrifice of life. Governor Marcy, in his annual message, three days subsequent to the loss of the *Mexico*, invited the attention of the legislature to the subject of the pilotage system.

"The legislature failed to act til 1845, when in response to remonstrances and appeals, all pilotage laws then in existence in the state were abolished and congress was petitioned by the state to make national laws to regulate all pilotage. Failing in this direction in 1846, the merchants and underwriters of New York, under the pressure of loss of life and money, by voluntary coöperation organized a Board of Commissioners of Pilots, composed of five members, two of whom were elected by the Chamber of Commerce and two by the Board of Underwriters, and one appointed by the Secretary of the Navy; whose duty it was "to examine and issue certificates to as many persons to act as pilots for the port of New York as they may deem the navigation of the port requires." This purely voluntary board gradually built up an efficient pilotage service whose benefits every transatlantic traveller still enjoys. And now follows the instructive paragraph in this incident in the legal history of New York :

"In 1853, when it was proposed to deal with the subject by legislation, the Chamber of Commerce and the leading marine underwriters dreaded a return to the old monopoly, and remonstrated against any legislative interference. But when the Legislature's bill was matured and when in June, 1854, the act was

passed, in one of those lucid intervals that come even to politicians and state legislators, it *adopted the system devised by the merchants and underwriters and created a board of five commissioners to be elected, three by the Chamber of Commerce and two by the Board of Underwriters, identical with the then existing board, save as to a representative of the Navy Department. The commissioners of the voluntary board were at once elected as members of the State Board, and every one of them served in it until the day of his death.*

"In this way, by adopting and legalizing the action of the merchants and underwriters, the Legislature of 1853 well and wisely divorced the Sandy Hook pilotage service from politics and partisanship, and delegated to the two commercial bodies in the great metropolis best qualified for the trust the selection of the State officers who should administer the system. The compulsory features of the law excited opposition, and it was denounced unconstitutional by reason of the method it provided for the election of the Commissioners, *but the Court of Appeals held that it was a valid and constitutional act.*"

I have dwelt at length upon this pilotage system of New York, because I believe it shows clearly a safe and efficient solution of precisely such a problem as we have before us, and because it illustrates once more our American ingenuity in making the government our servant rather than in appointing it as our master. A commission of six members in each state could be named by the two or three leading colleges or universities. This commission could be legally approved by the Legislature to pass upon the qualifications of all teachers in our private schools, and to examine these schools at stated times as is the practice in France. Such visitation by college professors and distinguished citizens would be primarily friendly, having in view the welfare of the schools and pupils. Worthy teachers would welcome such an interest and the consequent coöperation of judicious educators. Each state would create its own standard of excellence in the teaching body and in the results to be attained, having regard to the conditions of education in its own locality.

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